

1. Trailhead



From the junction of Vermont routes 4 and 12 in downtown Woodstock take route 12 north for 2.9 miles. Turn left onto Prosper Road.

After 0.7 miles the NPS trailhead parking lot is on the left.

Plants in their natural state live in mixed communities: different types, or species, of plants, live together and interact with one another in particular ways. This trail visits some of the naturally and artificially re-created plant communities found on Mount Tom. Their boundaries are not always clearly defined and species may overlap, but

they differ enough for us to distinguish a range of types of community.

- **From the trailhead kiosk at the Prosper Road parking lot, pass beside a gate and follow the MacKenzie Farm Trail through mixed woodland to a wide carriage road.**

Directly across the carriage road, fringed by maple trees, stands the Norway Spruce plantation of 1950.

2. Plantations

Why do we have forestry plantations on Mount Tom?

For thousands of years, dense forests flourished here during the 19th century, most of the Northeast's forests were felled for housing, railroad construction and fuel, and to clear land for sheep pasture.



Norway Spruce plantation

When Frederick Billings bought an estate on Mount Tom in 1869, the land had been almost completely cleared of trees.

Billings and his descendants reforested the hill with plantations of exotic and native trees and practiced sustainable forestry on Mount Tom into the 1950s. Billings' granddaughter Mary French Rockefeller and her husband Laurance donated the estate to the nation as a National Historical Park which opened in 1998.

- **Turn left along MacKenzie Road among mixed woodland. After 400 yards, pause in a much lighter area.**



Red pine,
Pinus resinosa



White pine,
Pinus strobus

3. Northern Hardwood Forest

The mix of trees has changed: this area shows the type of forest that regenerates naturally here if not replanted.



American Beech,
Fagus grandifolia

Downhill off the trail is a **rich northern hardwood forest** of sugar maple, American beech and white ash. The deep, rich, black soil supports an understory of native plants including blue cohosh, white snakeroot, wild leek and wild ginger.

- **Continue along MacKenzie Road, through a dusky red pine plantation dating from 1917 to a T-junction. Turn left on North Ridge Loop. Look around and enjoy the forest as you walk nearly half a mile to an overlook with a long low bench.**



White Ash,
Fraxinus americana



Red-eyed vireo,
Vireo olivaceus

These 'legacy' trees may have been among those spared to provide shade for stock animals during the 19th century forest clearances.

The soil here sustains a rich and varied herbaceous layer. Birds of these mixed hardwood forests include warblers, chickadees, red-eyed vireos and ovenbirds.



Ovenbird,
Seiurus aurocapilla

- **Follow the winding North Ridge Loop downhill. About 250 yards beyond the "To Spring Lot" sign, pause just past a left hand curve to look downhill off the side of the trail.**

5. Red Maple/Black Ash Swamp



Red Maple,
Acer rubrum



Striped Maple
Acer pennsylvanicum

This natural swampy area is part of the watershed that drains into Pogue Hole Brook and eventually into the Ottawa-quechee River. Dense undergrowth dominates the area except where standing water persists. The soil is a deep organic muck.

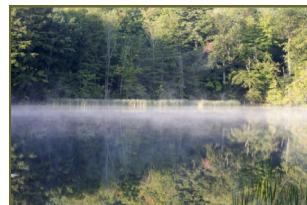
Shrubs and trees, chiefly red maple and black ash, but also American elm, striped maple and alternate-leaved dogwood, are able to grow on raised hummocks or on "nurse logs" – fallen trees that support plants and saplings above the level of permanent saturation.

- **Turn right at the next junction on an unsigned trail. At a trail junction triangle where a large hemlock and sugar maple stand, veer left toward The Pogue and a welcome bench.**

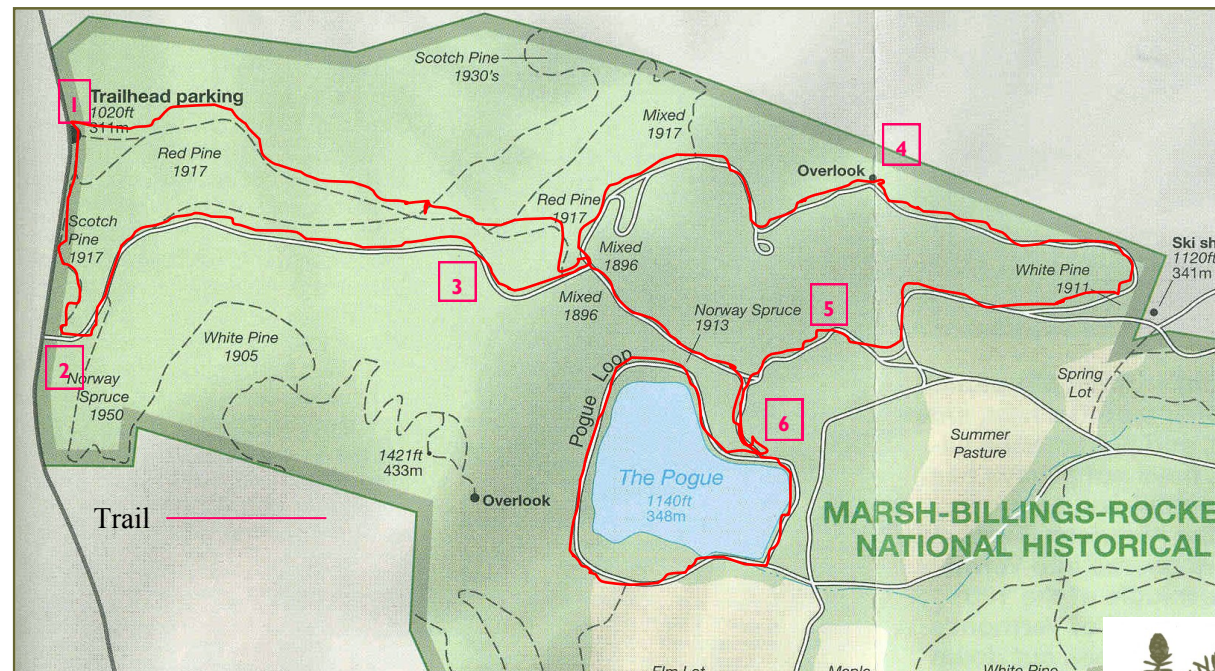
6. The Pogue

This 14-acre spring-fed pond has existed in this form for about 140 years.

Before Frederick Billings had it dredged and dammed in the late 1800s, a small expanse of open water and marsh occupied this area.



Continued on reverse



4. Hemlock Northern Hardwood Forest

From the overlook we see another type of naturally regenerated forest: **hemlock northern hardwood forest**. Here, evergreen hemlocks are mixed with beech, birch and maple.

A massive hemlock, likely more than 400 years old, stands beside the overlook; one of its contemporaries lies fallen among the undergrowth.



Eastern Hemlock
Tsuga canadensis



Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is the only National Park to tell the story of conservation history and the evolving nature of land stewardship in America.

The Park operates in partnership with the Woodstock Foundation, Inc, and the adjacent Billings Farm and Museum. The Park interprets the historic home of the Marsh, Billings and Rockefeller families, their conservation work and stewardship of the forest landscape and the emergence of an American conservation ethic. The 550-acre woodland continues to be managed for protection of natural resources, education, recreation, sustainable forestry, historic character and scenic beauty.



Guided tours of the historic mansion are offered daily Memorial Day through Halloween.

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller
National Historical Park
54 Elm Street
Woodstock, VT 05091
Phone: 802-457-3368
www.nps.gov/mabi



During summer, water lilies dot the surface of The Pogue, while broadleaved cattail, willow, and other wild plants ring the pond.

Two species of fish: yellow perch and large mouth bass, co-exist with other inhabitants of the pond, which include snapping and painted turtles, frogs, salamanders, newts and toads.

- ***Circle the Pogue and retrace your steps back up the path to the first junction. Turn left uphill.***
- ***At a sign-posted junction, turn left onto MacKenzie Road .***
- ***After just a few yards, turn right onto Prosper Trail, descending steeply through the red pine plantation of 1917, thinned for forest health and forest product in 2007.***
- ***Follow Prosper Trail until a right fork leads you back to the Prosper Road parking lot. Before reaching a short boardwalk, stop to admire the large old sugar maple on your right—another survivor of the 19th century clearances!***
- ***Your starting point is just across the boardwalk.***



Yellow Perch,
Perca flavescens



Largemouth Bass,
Micropterus

***Congratulations,
you've completed the
Forest Communities Hike!***

Notes:



- The landscape of Mount Tom blends plantations and naturally regenerated woodland.
- Are different plant communities apparent near your home?
- How has *your* landscape been affected by human activity?



Painted Turtle,
Chrysemys picta



American Toad,
Bufo Americanus

Take care of your National Park!

- Please do not pick or otherwise damage any natural or artificial object in this National Park.
- Dogs must be leashed at all times.
- Cycling is prohibited.
- No swimming is allowed in the Pogue in order to preserve its integrity – this means animals as well as people!



Marsh-Billings- Rockefeller National Historical Park



Walking a Re-created Landscape: The Forest Communities of Mount Tom

This two-hour, 3.6 mile moderate loop hike leads through gently sloping mixed woodland and forest plantations to a large scenic pond.

Sturdy footwear is recommended.

If possible, please return this brochure to the trailhead at the end of your hike so that other hikers may use it. Thank you.

